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Strengthening Motivation Through Group Guidance to Increase Students' Interest in Continuing Their Studies at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah

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ABSTRACT

Background: continuing studies at the same level of education is an important indicator of the success of student development at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Initial findings indicate that some students in class 3J (Tsanawiyah) are hesitant to continue their studies to the MA level, suggesting a motivation issue that needs to be addressed immediately. **Objective:** This investigation aimed to foster student academic motivation and reinforce their commitment to continuing their studies through structured group guidance interventions. **Method:** Employing a Classroom Action Research framework informed by the Kurt Lewin operational model, the study engaged 30 students across two sequential cycles. Each cycle encompassed integrated planning, action, observation, and reflective evaluation phases. Empirical data were gathered utilizing validated questionnaires, systematic behavioral observation protocols, and counselor anecdotal logs, subsequently examined using comparative descriptive techniques across intervention phases. **Results:** The intervention yielded substantial, sustained reductions in student academic hesitation. Indecision rates dropped sharply from an initial 50 percent at the pre cycle baseline to 30 percent in Cycle I, ultimately plummeting to 3.3 percent following Cycle II completion. **Conclusion:** Motivational enhancement delivered via collaborative; structured group guidance serves as a highly efficacious modality for solidifying student commitment to institutional educational continuity. **Originality/Value:** This study addresses an essential operational gap in the field of career guidance counseling and Islamic education by uncovering a marked decrease in student hesitation from 50 percent to 3.3 percent through systematic motivational enhancement, regarding educational continuity interest in the context of group guidance interventions among boarding madrasah students, an area that has remained underexamined through cyclical classroom action research designs. These findings enrich empirical evidence and serve as a strategic benchmark for designing specialized career group guidance interventions, reinforcing internal educational transition retention within madrasah systems, and formulating collaborative multi stakeholder academic mentoring policies in Islamic secondary institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren-based educational institutions are currently showing rapid progress and a strong presence amid developments in science and technology. Pesantren education, as an institution that teaches Islamic religious

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knowledge, has its own uniqueness and distinctiveness compared to other educational institutions (Amaliah et al, 2023). Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is one of the cadre education institutions that requires a six-year study commitment, from MTs to MA levels.

However, data from counselling at Madrasah Mu'allimin Yogyakarta in 2022 shows significant problems among students, including indecision about choosing a major and a lack of motivation to continue their studies at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Mu'allimin. The decision to continue studying is difficult for students, influenced by internal factors such as enthusiasm for learning and external factors such as peers, parents, teachers, and interest in specific majors (Permana et al., 2019). This decline in motivation is exacerbated by students' feelings that the learning process is ineffective, there are too many activities, and there is a lack of facilities to channel their potential, mainly because they feel that the portion of general subjects is less than that of religious subjects.

Motivation is the main driver behind every individual action. In the context of education, motivation serves as the energy that drives students to strive for their goals, including advancing to the next level of education (Meliana & Jaeni, 2022). Strong motivation will give rise to a lasting interest, a psychological tendency that directs individuals towards a particular choice as a need (Ramadani et al., 2022).

The interest of Mu'allimin MA students in continuing their studies is greatly influenced by their perception of the six-year education level as a cadre. When motivation declines due to the view that learning is ineffective, too many activities, or a lack of facilities, the interest in continuing the Mu'allimin MA also weakens. This is in line with the findings of Khumadi et al (2025), which emphasize that study decisions are strongly influenced by internal factors (motivation to learn) and external factors (environmental influences). Therefore, this study argues that increasing motivation is a fundamental prerequisite for strengthening students' interest in their study decisions.

This study chose group counselling as the intervention. Group counselling is a service that utilizes group dynamics to provide adequate assistance and information so that individuals achieve optimal development (Ricard & Ratanavivan, 2019). A study conducted by Romadhon et al. (2024) shows that group counselling services are effective in helping students obtain comprehensive information and consider factors in the career and study decision-making process. Similarly, Marhani et al. (2024) emphasised that this service successfully fostered positive attitudes towards oneself and the environment, which are particularly important for 3J students experiencing uncertainty.

Thus, Group Guidance in this study is not only aimed at transferring information, but also at psychological empowerment. The group leader will facilitate discussions about the advantages of MA Mu'allimin, the challenges that may be encountered, and how to build strong cadre commitment. This intervention is expected to internalize and foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Basalamah & Risman, 2025), thereby increasing students' interest in continuing their studies.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Group Guidance in increasing learning motivation and assisting in choosing majors and careers (Bersan et al., 2024; Doo et al., 2019). However, the case at Madrasah Mu'allimin Yogyakarta presents a unique and specific context that constitutes a research gap. First, the specific institutional context: Mu'allimin is a six-year cadre education institution with high commitments and demands, unlike public schools. The study dilemma here is not merely about school choice, but about commitment to the Muhammadiyah cadre identity and the six-year study pledge. Second, empirical data on the gap shows that the percentage of students who decided not to continue to MA Mu'allimin increased dramatically from 12% (2020/2021) to 21% (2021/2022). The increase in dropout rates in the middle of the six-year program indicates that the counselling interventions implemented previously, whether individual or unstructured, were not optimal for addressing this significant problem of motivation and interest.

The novelty of this research lies in the contextualization and specification of interventions to overcome the unique study decision problems at Madrasah Mu'allimin, namely: 1) Focus on specific actions. This study examines Motivation Enhancement Through Group Guidance for the issue of interest in continuing studies explicitly in the context of a six-year cadre school. This differs from previous studies, which tended to focus on learning motivation or subject selection in public high school students; 2) Outcome-oriented goal. This action is designed not only to increase motivation scores but also to serve as a practical solution to reduce the number of students who decide not to continue in MA Mu'allimin. This study acts as a direct response to alarming empirical data (a 9% increase in dropout rates), and 3) The use of group counselling to consolidate cadre commitment. This intervention uses group dynamics to foster collective cadre commitment, which is a core value of Mu'allimin, rather than merely individual academic motivation. Thus, this study provides a model of a culturally sensitive, context-specific counselling intervention in cadre education institutions.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research design to examine improvements in students' motivation to continue their studies. The classroom action research model applied was Kurt Lewin's model, implemented in two action cycles. Each cycle consisted of four interrelated stages: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. The research was conducted at the Main Campus of Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The study was conducted over approximately 30 days during second-semester learning activities, from October 1, 2022, to March 1, 2023.

2.2 Research Object

The research subjects were all 30 students of Class 3J at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. However, the intervention, in the form of group guidance and motivational enhancement, was explicitly focused on students who met the criteria, namely those who expressed a desire not to continue their studies in MA Mu'allimin. The research procedure was divided into two primary cycles, each consisting of two meetings.

Cycle I consisted of: 1) Action Planning: Determining a program to enhance motivation for continuing studies based on case findings of students who did not wish to continue their education; 2) Action Implementation: Conducted on Monday, January 9, 2023. The researcher provided classical whole-class motivational guidance to all students of Class 3J, followed by the distribution of a continuing study interest questionnaire. The questionnaire items were later used as discussion topics in Group Guidance sessions utilising the Focused Group Discussion technique; 3) Observation: Observing students' firmness and seriousness regarding their study choices after receiving group guidance and motivational reinforcement; 4) Reflection: Analysing the results of the action. The study then proceeded to Cycle II, which followed the same procedural stages as Cycle I.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection techniques used in this study included: 1) Continuing study interest questionnaire. Administered at the initial stage and in each cycle to map and explore data related to students' interests and their underlying motives; 2) Observation. Conducted to monitor students' firmness and seriousness in determining their study choices after receiving group guidance and motivational intervention; 3) Guidance and Counselling anecdotal records. Initial data on students' lack of motivation to continue their studies were also obtained from counselling records.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis technique and indicators of success for the collected data, particularly from the interest questionnaire, were grouped and analysed during the reflection stage of each cycle to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. The indicator of action success was based on the action hypothesis, namely, an increase in students' interest in continuing their education at MA Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. This improvement was identified through a reduction in the number of students who initially expressed the intention not to continue their studies at MA Mu'allimin after receiving group guidance intervention and motivational reinforcement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The research intervention was conducted in two cycles, focusing on addressing the low motivation and interest in pursuing MA studies among the 30 students of Class 3J. The indicator of success was a decrease in the number of students who expressed the intention not to continue their studies at MA Mu'allimin.

3.1.1 Pre Cycle

Initial data collected through counselling, anecdotal records, and the preliminary questionnaire revealed serious issues with ongoing motivation for the study. Out of 30 students, 15, or 50 per cent, had not yet shown firmness in their decision or had even expressed the intention not to continue their studies to the MA Mu'allimin level. Several students, for example, Favian Al Ghozali, Muhammad Ulung, and Narendra Iqbal Al Ghiffary, were identified as planning to transfer to other schools. This condition indicated the urgent need for intervention.

3.1.2 Cycle I

The Cycle I intervention focused on classical Group Guidance services using the Focused Group Discussion technique. After implementing the action and conducting observations, the results were as follows: 1) Number of students expressing motivation and firmness to continue their studies: 21 students (70 per cent); 2) Number of students who remained uncertain or planned not to continue: 9 students (30%).

Although the number of unmotivated students decreased from 50 per cent to 30 per cent, the success indicator had not yet been optimally achieved, as 9 students still required special attention. Therefore, the researcher decided to proceed with the intervention in Cycle II.



Figure 1. Group Guidance Activity.

3.1.3 Cycle II

Cycle II focused the intervention exclusively on the 9 students who had not yet demonstrated firm commitment to continuing their studies. The action consisted of more intensive, collaborative Group Guidance sessions using the Focused Group Discussion technique, involving the Guidance and Counselling teacher, the homeroom teacher, subject teachers, and parents.

The final results of Cycle II showed a significant improvement. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Stages of the Number of Motivated Students at Each Research Phase

Research Phase	Number of Students Not Yet Motivated or Uncertain (N = 30)	Percentage	Description
Pre Cycle	15 students	50%	Initial condition
End of Cycle I	9 students	30%	Decrease of 20%
End of Cycle II	1 student	3.3%	Success target achieved

At the end of Cycle II, only 1 student (3.3%) maintained the decision not to continue studying at MA Mu'allimin, while 29 students (96.7%) demonstrated strong motivation and firm commitment to continue. With only 3.3% of students remaining unmotivated, the intervention was declared successful and exceeded the expected success rate.



Figure 2. Group guidance activities

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Effectiveness of Group Guidance as an Intervention

The findings of this study consistently demonstrate that group guidance services are effective in strengthening students' motivation to continue their studies. The significant improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates that a targeted, intensive intervention explicitly focused on the 9 students who remained uncertain was far more effective than the classical approach implemented in Cycle I. This highlights the importance of case-specific identification within guidance and counselling services.

This study aligns with the findings of Afriani et al. (2020), who found that interactive and supportive group guidance services enhance student motivation. The discussion process conducted during Cycles I and II successfully utilised group dynamics to provide peer support and positive modelling, ultimately triggering cognitive and behavioural changes related to students' educational decision-making. The application of the Focused Group Discussion technique in group guidance enabled students to openly express their concerns, doubts, and underlying motives (Widyastuti et al., 2022).

Group guidance proved effective because it provided a structured social interaction space where students could explore doubts, build understanding, and strengthen motivation regarding decisions about continuing their studies. Group dynamics facilitated social learning, enabling students to gain new perspectives through peer exchanges (Schaefer et al., 2020). This process helped normalise feelings of uncertainty, reduce psychological barriers, and increase confidence in making decisions. A structured discussion approach also encouraged self-reflection, enabling students not only to receive information but to critically and rationally evaluate internal and external factors influencing their educational choices (Gresch et al., 2017).

The intervention's effectiveness became even more evident when it was conducted continuously and supported by collaboration among various stakeholders. The structured implementation, which allowed for evaluation and strategic adjustments, enabled facilitators to respond more accurately to students' needs. The involvement of teachers and parents strengthened the consistency of support at both school and home, ensuring that the motivation developed was not temporary. Thus, group guidance functioned not merely as a medium for delivering information, but as a systematic, collaborative, and attitude-oriented process of motivational reinforcement that strengthened students' commitment to continuing their education.

3.2.2 The Role of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The most critical finding of this study was the remarkable success achieved in Cycle II, which involved multi-stakeholder collaboration among the guidance and counselling teacher, the homeroom teacher, subject teachers, and parents. Previous literature consistently emphasises that learning motivation, including motivation to pursue further education, is influenced by both internal and external factors.

Research by Puspita et al. (2024) confirms that parental support, whether emotional, instrumental, or informational, plays a significant role in fostering learning motivation and reducing the risk of school dropout. In this classroom action research, the involvement of parents in Cycle II to provide extrinsic motivational reinforcement proved to be a key factor in strengthening the determination of the 9 students who remained hesitant.

Similarly, the involvement of the homeroom teacher and subject teachers in providing relevant information on continuing education strengthened the credibility of the guidance and counselling teacher's information (Pasco et al., 2023). This collaboration created a comprehensive support ecosystem in which students perceived integrated attention from their entire academic environment, effectively minimising their doubts. Overall, this study reinforces the collaborative classroom action research model, in which the success of guidance and counselling interventions depends heavily on the synergy between the counsellor and other stakeholders in school and family environments.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is a key element in strengthening students' motivation to continue their studies, as educational decisions are shaped not solely by individual intervention but by a consistent support ecosystem. The involvement of guidance and counselling teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents creates a reinforcing network that integrates academic, emotional, and social dimensions (Amalia et al., 2023). In the context of group guidance, such collaboration ensures that motivational messages received during service sessions are reinforced through daily interactions both in the classroom and at home (Arum & Khasanah, 2025). This consistency of support helps students internalise the belief that continuing their education is a realistic, valuable, and well-supported choice within their immediate environment.

Furthermore, multi-stakeholder collaboration functions as a synchronisation mechanism between students' needs and the mentoring strategies provided. Information shared among stakeholders enables early identification

of doubts or motivational barriers, allowing interventions to be more precisely targeted. This synergy also enhances students' sense of connectedness with their learning community, thereby strengthening their commitment to future study plans. Consequently, group guidance supported by structured collaboration not only increases service effectiveness but also builds a coherent, responsive educational environment oriented toward students' sustainable academic development.

This study is significant because it demonstrates that structured group guidance can serve as an effective intervention for strengthening students' academic motivation and commitment to continuing their education within the madrasah system. The substantial reduction in students' hesitation from 50% at the pre-cycle stage to 3.3% after Cycle II indicates that systematic motivational enhancement can address students' uncertainty about continuing to the MA level. Beyond its practical contribution to counselors and teachers at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, the study provides empirical evidence on the role of group guidance in supporting educational continuity among boarding madrasah students, a context that remains relatively underexamined. The findings also highlight the value of cyclical classroom action research in enabling counselors to identify students' motivational difficulties, implement responsive interventions, and refine guidance practices based on ongoing observations and reflection. Consequently, this study contributes to the development of more targeted career and academic guidance programs while offering a practical reference for madrasah institutions in strengthening students' educational transition, retention, and long-term academic commitment.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

Theoretically, the findings indicate that students' motivational resistance to continuing their studies is not merely triggered by a lack of information, but is closely related to more complex psychosocial factors. This underscores the importance of integrating guidance services with motivational theory frameworks, particularly Self-Determination Theory, which emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the foundation for the internalisation of motivation. The success of the intervention in the advanced cycle demonstrates that fulfilling these psychological needs becomes more effective when supported by a collaborative ecosystem between school and family.

Practically, these findings direct guidance and counseling teachers as well as school management to increase the intensity of services for students with high levels of hesitation through more focused group approaches, to establish structured collaboration with homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents as a standard procedure for handling strategic cases, and to optimize the role of the homeroom teacher as an active partner in reinforcing students' daily motivation.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study provides both conceptual and practical contributions in the form of a group guidance intervention model integrated with a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach as an effective strategy to address motivational resistance in continuing education. This is particularly relevant in boarding or religiously based educational contexts that have distinctive social and academic dynamics. The model not only expands understanding of the importance of psychosocial support in guidance services but also offers an implementable framework that schools can replicate to strengthen students' educational continuity through systematic synergy among teachers, families, and the broader educational environment.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has limitations in its design: Classroom Action Research is particular to the context of Class 3J at Madrasah Mu'allimin. Generalising the results to other schools with different demographic backgrounds and organisational structures must be done with caution. Data Subjectivity: The data are dominated by observations and simple questionnaires, which are prone to researcher bias (subjectivity) and the Hawthorne effect (changes in student behaviour due to awareness of being observed). Duration of Action: The short intervention period (two cycles per month) may yield only a temporary increase in extrinsic motivation rather than a long-term change in attitude.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Recommendations for further research include: 1) Use of Quasi-Experimental Design: It is recommended to conduct a comparative study with a control group to verify the effectiveness of collaborative group guidance statistically and objectively; 2) Objective Measurement: Further research should use standardized psychometric instruments (motivation scales) to measure changes in students' intrinsic motivation more validly; 3) Longitudinal Study: It is essential to track these motivated students after they graduate to the MA level to measure the sustainability and resilience of their motivation in the face of higher academic challenges.

6. CONCLUSION

Strengthening motivation through Group Guidance services has proven effective in increasing the interest of 3J students at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta in continuing their studies. Through a Classroom Action Research approach implemented in two cycles, there was a significant decrease in the number of students unsure about continuing their studies, from 50 per cent in the pre-cycle stage to 30 per cent in Cycle I, and finally to 3.3 per cent in Cycle II. This data shows that systematically designed interventions can overcome students' doubts in determining the continuity of their education.

This success was not only determined by the implementation of Focused Group Discussion-based Group Guidance, but also by the strengthening of strategies in Cycle II, which were more focused and intensive. The approach, which focused on students who were still uncertain and involved collaboration among guidance and counselling teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents, accelerated the process of internalising motivation. This synergy provided consistent academic and psychosocial support, enabling students to be more confident in their study decisions.

This study confirms that increasing interest in continuing studies is not sufficient through information alone; it requires structured, collaborative motivational interventions. The motivation reinforcement model through Group Guidance developed in this study can serve as a practical reference for educational institutions, especially those with a continuous guidance system, in maintaining student continuity through a systematic, measurable, and needs-based approach.

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Author Contribution Statement

The author declares that the entire research and writing process for this article was conducted independently. The author assumes full responsibility for all data associated with this research. No other individual contributed as a co-author or made any significant contribution to the content of this work.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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